

## **VULNERABLE LIVES MATTER MOST—TUE/6/OCT/2020—DDB.**

This is my humble view and therefore, a question must be raised after listening to and reading the Trinidad and Tobago's 2021 Budget Presentation, yesterday, the 5<sup>Th</sup> day of October 2021, in our Parliament Chamber, by the Honourable Finance Minister, Mr. Colm Imbert.

In order to realize the Minister's expectation of "**societal cooperation**" in his conclusion of the budget Presentation, I must remind him, as a senior citizen, of the Silver Generation, 72 years, 4 months and 6 days to date, that 46 plus years, doing practiced based philosophical research work in the Housing and Development Sector; have identified and confirmed the value and importance of the senior citizen contributions, in managing peaceful, constructive, sustainable development of our beloved Nation; **that his Government's neglect to fully respect this Silver Generation, will lead to consequences, no citizen or resident, hope to experience.**

In 2018 he ended his Budget Presentation using Frank Sinatra's song My Way, with his words "**We did It Our Way**" and in 2019, he ended his Budget Presentation with Bob Marley's words "**Stand Up for What Is right**".

**"Our Way,"** in my humble view, is what the whole of Trinidad and Tobago would like to be done and not what one Party want to do and **What Is Right,** has been beautifully described in the PNM's 2020 Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago 2 QUOTES IMMEDIATELY BELOW. The **Stand-Up** action is this correspondence, which will be shared far and wide and the giving of my address and contact details, in order to gather and analyze responses, from other citizens and residents, who have experienced and is experiencing similar disrespect to them as senior citizens. The filing of **Class Action Suits** is the goal in this **Stand-Up** action, claiming large sums of money for Redress and Punitive Damages for abuse of power. Being unable to pay on the anticipated Court Order, is going to allow seizure of Assets for Sale.

### 1. ROADMAP FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, PAGE 13 QUOTE: -

**COVID-19 has imposed a reality check on us; a check that requires face-on, addressing of these vulnerabilities and weaknesses with which we have become accustomed living, and which have become priorities.**

**It is well-known that COVID-19 has been having a serious impact on the socioeconomic condition of large sections of the population, even as the pandemic continues to pummel the economy.** UNQUOTE.

### 2. ROADMAP FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, PAGE 24 "QUOTE"

**The first concern of the Government is the human impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. People have been getting sick, with many others facing dire challenges to their lives and livelihoods because of the response to the crisis. These persons therefore must be the immediate to short-term focus for support by the Government. People have lost their jobs and many others are unable to earn an income because their places of work are simply not in operation. Schools have moved to online teaching and learning thus impacting children, and inherently their parents, who depend on the national school feeding Programme for daily meals. It means that apart from the thousands of persons who are current beneficiaries of the social safety net, thousands more will need immediate support, whether it be for food, housing, or special health support. Hence, the social services delivery system will not only be dealing with many more people, but it will be called upon to do many more things. In other words, there will be an immediate need for these services to be upgraded, both in terms of resources and in respect of the management of these services. The Roadmap will identify specific measures**

**which will be taken in the very near future to ensure that the mantra of ‘no one left behind’ becomes a reality.** UNQUOTE”.

FIRST AND FOREMOST is the **Concealed Fraudulent** behaviour by the National insurance Board, in the implementation of the Clause 45 in the National Insurance Act, Chapter 32:01.

Citizens must comply by law to pay National Insurance Contributions, but NIB only records 52 such contributions per year from individuals, even if they work 4 different places and pay contributions from all four, adding the sum of your contributions to be recorded at the highest Class they have, but not counting the number of other contributions they make, which can make you eligible for a retirement pension or large retirement grant, if you do not earn the 750 Contributions using their method of only counting 52 Contributions per annum. If this is not **Fraud, misrepresentation, inefficiency, and abuse** to senior citizens at retirement, then I will apologize. Anyone can see that this action is wrong, and this act is encouraging **Concealment Fraud**, (how it was defined by a learned friend.) See the offending Clause of the NIB below: -

*Quote: -NATIONAL INSURANCE ACT CHAPTER 32:01, Clause 45. Where an employed person is employed by more than one person or where his earnings are paid jointly by more than one person during any contribution year in which a contribution is payable or where such employed person works under the control and management of some person other than his immediate employer, the Board shall total all contributions paid for the employed person in that year and place the employed person in the highest class that such total contribution would permit for the number of weeks worked. Unquote.*

This Act was introduced in 1972 by the PNM and hundreds of **vulnerable** seniors could have been denied their deserving Pension Benefit, **including me**, because the NIB failed to consider their full number of Contributions, when they must retire. This **Stand-Up** effort is going to act now for that 48 plus years of abuse to our hard-working citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago, **including me**, many of whom refused to leave here for allegedly greener pastures, in addition to destroying many family lives by separation.

SECONDLY and just as important is the delivery of **Pensions** to our seniors, who gave the best years of their life working for the Trinidad and Tobago Public Service. This Pension Sum already paid for by the public working population, during their active working years and which is still considered income for Tax purposes, if the pensioner get further employment, it is added to any additional income and taxed. In 2010 when the People’s Partnership came into Government, they raised Public Service Pensions from \$1,950.00 to \$3,000.00 on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the People’s Partnership raised Public Service Pensions to \$3,500.00 in the 2015 Budget Presentation, by Senator Larry Howai, Minister of Finance and the Economy. Do you know that Mr. Imbert listed this action by the People’s Partnership as an Achievement by the PNM in his 2021 Budget Presentation? This is what Minister Awai said, QUOTE: -

**“Our senior citizens and retired public service officers remain among the vulnerable and at risk group in our society. As a Government with a demonstrable commitment to us citizens, we cannot be oblivious to the sterling contribution which these citizens made to our country. I propose to increase these pensions.”**

The monthly pension for retired public officers will be increased by \$500 per month with a minimum of \$3,500 per month at an additional cost of \$240.0 million and will impact 35,000 retirees. In 2010, the minimum pension for retired public officers was \$1,950; “UNQUOTE.

I accept that policy maker’s talk about providing adequate care for our vulnerable senior citizens, as the 2 QUOTES from the ROADMAP FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, above mentioned, but not all such talk materialize into concrete action, as the People’s Partnership exampled.

In Monday’s 2021 Budget Presentation, Minister Imbert said and it is recorded in the Budget hard copy on page 60, under the Heading Social Development: QUOTE: -

“Madam Speaker, our new development model will be much more human-centered. We have long ensured that our expanding economy accommodate the most vulnerable and underprivileged in our community – pensioners, the elderly, the unemployed, the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. A multi-faceted social safety net allows these citizens to deal with extraordinary burdens, especially in times of crises.” UNQUOTE.

However, with the PNM that policy talk does not move to the ACTION STAGE, when it comes to the vulnerable senior citizens compensation for the time worked in the Public service.

It is safe to assume that the PNM is very reluctant to put their concern for the vulnerable senior citizens into decisive action by the lack of any Pension Increases for the last 5 years of their governance and what Minister Imbert said in in delivering the 2020 Budget and recorded on Page 140 under the Heading Public Service Pension, confirms that. QUOTE:

“Madam Speaker, I propose to review public service pensions with a view to indexing these pensions at an appropriate level. This review will be completed in fiscal 2020.” UNQUOTE.

After 5 years of no action and nothing for 2021, with the deadly Pandemic of COVID 19, wreaking havoc on many of our vulnerable senior citizens, who have unemployed and underemployed children at home to take care of and grandchildren, with one or no parent alive assisting, to also take care of.

Surprisingly, just recently the PNM raised all Parliamentarians and Senior Government Officials Pension offers, in a Billion Dollar Package, and Public Servants have to manage with a fixed \$3,500.00 monthly.

The above mentioned 2 (two) Points which are going to be shared for collecting a database of senior citizens experiencing abuse by our Policy Makers, are just the tip of the Iceberg. Malfunctioning State Institutions, unacceptable Parliamentary Behaviour, malaise in implementing much needed legislation, reform of our Constitution, not far behind for urgent attention.

Contact me to join my **STAND-UP** order from our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Colm Imbert.

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**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.—God has taken charge and we have to Shape Up or Ship Out.**